

ON DISC

(Continued from page 13)

Discipline is comfortably on its own, and can be approached by even staunch anti-punks without fear. Insufferably self-assured, obscure as a rock theorist and inconsistent as a record-maker, Robert Fripp nevertheless cannot be dismissed. After his brief-lived League of Gentleman outing earlier this year, Fripp has reinvented the band that won him fame in the first place — King Crimson, disbanded in the mid-Seventies after a trailblazing career among British progressive rock groups.

The album has an unashamedly intellectual tone. While such tracks as "Elephant Talk" and "Thela Hun Ginjeet" have peppy percussion lines, it's best to dance in your head to this LP. And there's much for both the mind and the senses to enjoy here: gently whining guitar murmurs, soothing touches of congas and marimbas, tasty jazz and even raga-like arrangements. When *Discipline's* mood threatens to stay serene, eruptions of drum-banging and clanging guitar riffs break the peace nicely. Below is the voice of the new King Crimson, and his humorous David Byrne-like yelp is right for the album's curious lyrics. Several tracks ("Indiscipline," "Thela Hun Ginjeet") are more narrated than sung, yet another unexpected touch in an album full of them.

Barry Alfonso

COUP DE GRACE
Mink DeVille

(Atlantic) Willy DeVille is an anomaly among the new breed of rockers. You probably know him via his menacing version of "Cadillac Walk" but his real forte and true love are the unabashedly romantic, uptown soul ballads that gave the likes of Ben E. King a string of hits in the very early Sixties. Willy's passion for the music extends to looking and acting the part, too — if *Saturday Night Fever* had been set in Spanish Harlem circa 1962, he would have been the ideal choice to play the lead role.

Coup De Grace, Mink DeVille's first LP for Atlantic (the very label that released most of those old r&b classics young Willy lost his heart to), unfortunately isn't the match-made-in-heaven it could have been. DeVille and co-producer Jack Nitzsche have saddled these tunes with monochromatic arrangements. The performances have nothing in the way of tension, dynamics or color and consequently fail to generate the sense of drama that is absolutely central to this music.

Predictably, DeVille shines brightest on the slower material — no one, but no one, among rock singers can tackle an old-fashioned soul ballad as convincingly as he does. "Help Me to Make It" and "You Better Move On" (both covers) and Willy's own "So in Love Are We" fare best here while "Love Me Like You Did Before" stands as one of his most successful forays into uptempo Stones swagger.

Coup De Grace is a proficient, workmanlike record but it's too flawed to break DeVille to a wider audience. If you're looking for an introduction, try to track down *Cabretta*, Mink DeVille's first Capitol album, which boasts his best batch of songs to date including an utterly magnificent gem of a soul ballad, "Mixed Up, Shook Up Girl."

Don Snowden

Lindsey Buckingham is talking about one of his heroes. It's a cautionary tale, with many unspoken implications, and the dashing singer/songwriter, guitarist and progressive wedge for Fleetwood Mac — the most hugely successful of all hugely successful mega-buck bands of the last decade — is making his parallels very obvious.

"Anyone who knows anything about the Beach Boys," he says, lounging in a windowless, frigidly air conditioned back room of his manager's Hollywood headquarters, "knows that Brian Wilson *was* the group."

It may seem a smidge odd that Buckingham, dressed down in ratty pin stripe pants, battered loafers and what looks like a khaki green surgical smock, should be ruminating on a man and a band whose best work was fifteen years ago. After all, *Law and Order*, the criminally handsome musician's first solo LP, has just hit the racks, while the album's debut single "Trouble" is currently making its bulleted way up the Top 40 charts. If nothing else, the boyish, curly-headed 32-year-old should be plugging the upcoming Fleetwood Mac effort, the band's studio follow-up to its ambitious, qualified failure *Tusk* (4 million double LP's sold as opposed to 16 million for 1977's legendary *Rumours*, still the best selling album in pop history). But no, he wants to talk about the quirky, solitary and monolithic genius of Brian Wilson, and for reasons that quickly become apparent.

"It just got to a point, I think with Brian that he became so detached from the group that it was impossible to make the music he heard in his head using the capacities of the band. If he'd made the choice to break away from his brothers, to not be responsible for them, he'd be much better off today. Even if he'd had to settle into his own fairly obscure niche, he wouldn't have had to compromise. It's sort of sad."

Between the lines, of course, the point is clear. Lindsey Buckingham has reached a strikingly similar crossroads in his own career. It's not that he compares his talents to those of that formidable mastermind of the California Sound. "I'll never even get close," he asserts in an obligatory disclaimer. It's just that as a member of a globally renowned quintet, with fistfuls of fame, fortune and epoch-making music, Buckingham suddenly finds himself in search of that mercurial grail, Artistic Fulfillment.

Born and raised in the South Bay area of San Francisco, Buckingham began playing guitar at age seven, taking his cue from his older brother's rock and roll singles, most notably Buddy Holly. In the late Sixties, he joined forces with Stephanie (later Stevie) Nicks in a group called Fritz. The band plied the Northern California club circuit before relocating in L.A. and cutting *Buckingham/Nicks* as a duo. The LP was a regional hit in, of all places, Birmingham, Alabama. The pair's producer, Keith Olsen, used the album to pitch his own production talents to Mick Fleetwood of the venerable British blues band, Fleetwood Mac. Fleetwood was duly impressed with both Olsen and the album. Stevie and Lindsey became Big Macs after Bob Welch left the group.

Buckingham's dynamic rise as a songwriter and guitarist is chronicled

on Fleetwood Mac's two mythic albums, *Fleetwood Mac* and *Rumours*. His contributions in those halcyon years included tunes like "Monday Morning," "Second Hand News," "Never Going Back Again," and the awesomely commercial "Go Your Own Way." But Buckingham was considerably more than a hit-making cog in the Mac machine. The full extent of his audacious experimental prowess became fully evident on 1979's *Tusk*, about as complete a creative departure as any group could make and still be considered the same entity.

"I'm still very proud of that album," insists Buckingham. "Before it was released, everyone was really excited about what we'd done, but

after it was apparent that it wasn't selling, opinions in the band changed. I got remarks like, 'you went too far this time Lindsey.' Fine. Having been made responsible for the album's failure only made me want to go further with the same ideas."

Going further in this case resulted in *Law and Order*, an LP that advances his singular musical philosophy along immensely satisfying lines. "I reject the idea that rock must be built around a bass and drums," he asserts and to prove the point he has crafted a buoyant, tuneful sound that depends as much on delicate harmonies, multi-layered guitars and intricately floated arrangements as any vintage Brian Wilson studio opus. "It's been compared to the Beach Boys," Buckingham beams, "John Lennon and Harry Nilsson. I'm flattered."

The most impressive aspect of *Law and Order*, aside from several melodies which catch and hold after a single listening, is the do-it-yourself spirit of the project. Every instrument (with the exception of the odd drum track), all vocal parts, arranging, engineering and much of the producing were handled by Buckingham himself. What could have ended up a sterile exercise in studio gimcrackery is instead a surprisingly spontaneous effort.

"I could have gotten a bunch of great studio musicians together," comments Buckingham, "but then it would have sounded like another one of those albums. I get enough of that with Fleetwood Mac. They're all great musicians. But all the music ends up being driven by bass and drums, with everything else out on the edge. I always felt there were too many people involved in the creative process in the band," he continues. "It made it very

difficult at times."

Buckingham's decidedly blasé attitude about the supergroup was reflected in his recent refusal to sign the renewal contract offered the band by Warner Bros. While insisting that "the policy right now" is for the group to stay together he admits, "I'm sure Fleetwood Mac will outlive its meaning sooner or later." In fact, Buckingham came to this interview from a recording session for the next Mac LP.

"*Law and Order* was a very intimate experience," Buckingham concludes. "The only way to maintain innocence that I know of is to choose things you care about and commit yourself to them. If I had to choose between commercial success and the kind of pleasure I got from doing this album, there'd be no contest."



HOWARD ROSENBERG

Lindsey Buckingham's Beach Boy Gambit:

BE TRUE TO YOUR MUSE

BY DAVIN SEAY